



# Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

**L**imitation in the ability to perform usual activities can occur due to disease, physical impairment or mental illness. Activity limitation is often temporary and is due to conditions of limited duration, such as surgery or a broken limb. As women grow older, activity limitation occurs more often or becomes permanent and is frequently due to health conditions such as arthritis, stroke, chronic pain, and urinary incontinence. Limitation in the ability to perform basic activities such as bathing, dressing, or walking a short distance threaten a woman's ability to live independently. Most women have adapted well to living with limitations. However, when unable to perform these activities, it may be necessary for a woman to move to an assisted living facility, hire help within the home, or rely on family and friends for assistance. Limitation in activity can be exacerbated by smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and being overweight.

The 1998 California Women's Health Survey asked women about six types of activity limitation: **"During the last four weeks, has your health limited: vigorous activities (e.g., lift heavy objects, strenuous sports); moderate activities (e.g., move table, carry groceries); the ability to walk up a hill or climb several flights of stairs; bending, lifting, or stooping; walking one block; eating,**

**dressing, bathing, or using the toilet?"**

Other questions asked the most important reason for their activity limitation and about smoking, alcohol use, weight, number of days activity was limited due to physical health, frequent pain, and urinary incontinence.

Overall, 43% of women ages 55 and older reported one or more limited activities. The oldest women (ages 75+) were most likely to report limitation (53%), followed by women ages 65-74 (41%) and women ages 55-64 (38%). The main reasons for activity limitation were back or neck problems (19%), arthritis (13%), "getting old" (11%), lung/breathing problems (7%) and cardiovascular problems (6%).

Among those ages 55 and older, women who reported limitation were more likely than women without limitation to smoke (17% vs. 13%), be overweight (40% vs. 29%), report their health status as fair or poor (44% vs. 10%), and indicate that due to physical health activity was limited daily (22% vs. 1%).

Among women ages 55 and older, those who reported limitation in usual activities were more likely to report pain, urinary incontinence, and sitting for five or more hours a day than those without limitation.

## ACTIVITY LIMITATION AND PHYSICAL HEALTH AMONG WOMEN AGES 55 AND OLDER, CALIFORNIA, 1998

CMRI (California Medical Review, Inc.)

Pain, Urinary Incontinence and Sitting 5+ Hours per Day  
Among Women Ages 55 and Older  
by Activity Limitation, California, 1998

